

Professional Book Reviews

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Riveting Reads 6-8

Goodwin, P. (2007). *Riveting reads. 6-8*. Swindon: School Library Association.

Titles of quality books to be used to ‘engage, delight, fascinate and entertain children whether they read to themselves or are read to by an adult’ is a veritable gold mine. It provides a wealth of titles, from well known and new authors and illustrators.

Prue Goodwin has brought her extensive educational experience in the field and in training institutions to bear on selecting and organizing a quality collection for the novice, and an enriching selection for the experienced teacher. Her introduction is useful in setting the framework for the choices.

The annotations are clear and succinct. They give a good coverage of the character, the setting, or the plot line which may be the strength of the title. The copyrights range from 1984 to 2006. One may conclude that they have been tried and true titles for most classrooms. ‘Where to find help’ gives useful references to people, agencies, Web sites.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Riveting Reads 8-12

Sennitt, J., & Armstrong, E. (2006). *Riveting reads*. Wanborough: School Library Association.

The need to redress the imbalance between reading as a class act and reading for pleasure and enjoyment motivates this collection. Jo Sennitt, whose experience in collection development is extensive, aims to ‘promote active ‘real reading with children.’ She aims to introduce parents, teachers, library staff, in fact everyone to good quality contemporary literature for 8 – 12 year olds, and to help them to find books that this age range will enjoy.

The introduction provides a very useful reference and commentary on the National Foundation for Educational Research. At the end of the volume, ‘Book Selection: Where to get help’ introduces key agencies and tools to be used in the selection process. A useful index of authors, illustrators and editors is provided also.

The volume is thematically organized around: animal stories, families & friends, fantasy & other worlds, folk and fairy tales, fun stories, ghost & other scary things, historical stories, picture books, poetry, and our world. These are appropriate categories for the age group under consideration. The annotations are informative, and a pleasure to read. Age appropriateness is indicated for each title.

What more could a beginning teacher want than a tool designed as this one its. It gives the quality titles from 2002 – 2005, and is obviously the choice selections from a tried and true collection and user.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Riveting Reads 12 – 16

Armstrong, E. *Riveting reads. 12-16* / Eileen Armstrong. Swindon: School Library Association.

Young people's reading habits are changing rapidly. Research is quoted in the introduction to survey the current scene in the UK. The ten websites' footnotes are invaluable for confirming the research and reports at the moment. This information makes the purchase of the document totally worthwhile.

Eileen Armstrong, from her role as an LRC manager, educator, and leader, obviously understands the themes that young adults enjoy. She has grouped the titles wisely, and has covered a wide range of interests, levels and abilities. The annotations are informative. Websites are often provided for the author, series, or title to pique further interest. Following some of these electronic connections introduces many other aspects of why one might like to acquire and share a title.

This is a powerful collection. It is current, although copyright dates are not provided. With these books on the shelf, and an enthusiastic librarian who loves books, it would be hard to imagine that teenagers would not be caught by the enjoyment of reading for pleasure.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

A View of the World

School Library Association, & Oxfordshire School Library Association. (2006). *A view of the world*. Riveting reads plus. Wanborough, Nr. Swindon, Wiltshire: School Library Association.

"This is a world where, more than ever, we need to understand each other, to appreciate and celebrate difference and to create an awareness of the situations in far-off places." With that as the goal, members of the Oxfordshire School Library Association set about to select and recommend the books and films (up to age 19) that they thought would provide a strong response. Most everything in their list has been published in the last ten years.

Social upheavals in some countries may have changed the scene, but the titles here reflect society as it was at one point. Many of the titles chosen reflect the experiences of migrant populations, of life in unfamiliar surroundings, of the perils and difficulties of escaping from repression.

This is a rich collection. The provision of some author profiles is an added bonus.

Purchasers of this valuable collection get as well a guide to using multi-national literature in the classroom, and at least 44 helpful web addresses. The keyword index covers at least 108 countries or cultural groups, as well as many other thematic approaches. It is an impressive collection. Citations also include key words, age range, ISBN

Teachers and Librarians would do well to use this tool as a guide to measure the 'view of the world' that is represented in the fiction in their collection. Some titles may be out of print, but they too can be found with a little searching. When one has such a high quality document, having it available for students to reference as well is an important factor.

HIGH RECOMMENDED

Visionary Spaces: Designing & Planning a Secondary School Library

Dubber, G., & Lemaire, K. (2007). *Visionary spaces: designing and planning a secondary school library*. SLA guidelines plus. Swindon: School Library Association.

If your jurisdiction is beginning to refurbish or rebuild your school, where do you begin your thinking in order to influence the place and design of the library in the new structure? What are the things that you think about in the ‘new library thinking’? This volume is an invaluable planning guide. It starts with the basic premise of why a library, and moves on to the kinds of spaces that need to be considered, and for what purpose. The writing is clear and concise. The suggestions are practical and based on sound principles.

Three case studies provide a variety of approaches and designs. The sketches and illustrations are valuable to encourage one to imagine how things might evolve.

Appendices are important here. “A Refurbishment Project” is an enlightened way to look at problems, and consider alternative solutions. The list of suppliers will be useful in UK contexts. Some may well have offices in other countries too.

Lemaire and Dubber are to be highly commended for the quality of this publication. It is a valuable contribution to the ‘Further Reading’ that teacher-librarians need to undertake in order to provide quality consultation and effective leadership with their administration when any re-modelling or refurbishment is undertaken.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Blogs and Bytes: ICT and the Secondary School Library

Bradnock, M. (2007). *Blogs and bytes: ICT and the secondary school library*. SLA guidelines plus. Swindon: School Library Association.

Bradnock brings a wide variety of practical experiences to the preparation of this informative and well-organized document. Her experience becomes evident as one reads through the various sections, and appreciates the scope of the work and its content.

Some of the aspects that are examined include: The School Library & ICT; ICT to support professional practice; ICT to find information; ICT to support learners; and ICT for reader development. In addition there is a section related to ICT and the law (UK), as well as a selective bibliography.

The style is easy reading, logical flow, and informative details. For example, the section on “Evaluating web content” offers practical advice on how to approach the topic with both teachers and students, and how to apply this topic on a continuing basis. Websites are supplied where appropriate. A similarly informative and well-prepared section deals with “Searching the Web”

The Reader Development section is rich in ideas and websites that can be used with a variety of students. The sites are all highly creditable, and well worth investigating.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for district level resource centres, for trainers in ICT programs, and for students beginning to explore the field.

Fully Booked! Reader Development and the Secondary School LRC

Armstrong, E. (2004). *Fully booked!: reader development and the secondary school LRC*. SLA guidelines plus. Wanborough: School Library Association.

Imagine going to a ‘Reading Restaurant’ and selecting from a menu uniquely designed for the clients. Appreciate the practical approach to introducing reading to your teenaged readers in such a setting. The birthplace for this volume was in a ‘hands-on workshop’ entitled ‘Tempting Teenage Literary Tastebuds’ in Leeds in 2002. It incorporates many of the ideas from that session, as well as the experience of Armstrong working in a large secondary level school/college in the UK.

Fully Booked is based on ready-to-run, often fairly cheap and cheerful ideas for promoting real reading, which can make an impact and create readers for life. What better recommendations? It is an exciting read. She avoids jargon, and deals in down-to-earth comments on current situations. Buy this one for the stimulation to put real reading programs back into the school, and into the curriculum in a way that doesn’t drive students away from the love of literature.

Above all, buy it for the appendices. Consider some of the headings: Library Makeover Ideas, Raising the Reading Profile, Reading Group activities, Trigger Questions for Booktalking, A Reading Year, and Reader Development Websites. These sections are full of excellent ideas.

And above all, enjoy the introductory story by Michael Morpurgo, UK Children’s Laureate entitled “I Believe in Unicorns”.

HIGH RECOMMENDED for the practicing teacher-librarian in any level school, but especially for those working with teenagers and young adults.

The Power of the Media Specialist to Improve Academic Achievement and Strengthen At-Risk Students

Jones, J. B., & Zambone, A. M. (2008). *The power of media specialists to improve academic achievement and strengthen at-risk students*. Columbus, Ohio: Linworth Books.

There is serious concern in the United States that the education system is failing many students of colour, from low-income families, with disabilities, and those who have limited English proficiency. Biles and Zambone take the stand that the media specialist is in a unique position to become an instructional change agent. They base their premise on (1) the research findings showing the best ways to increase academic achievement and strengthen at-risk youth; (2) the knowledge and strategies to change the culture of the school library program; and (3) to provide a blueprint for the school library program to become the heart of the school and integral to student achievement.

The book is premised on the concept of dispositions – personal, professional & ethical qualities – of the individual working in the school library. These dispositions are instrumental to improving academic achievement and strengthening at-risk youth by creating an environment in which students flourish.

The second major concept in the book is ‘systems change’. The authors then proceed to use the research findings coupled with observed best practice to place dispositions and systematic change within the reach of every school librarian.

An awareness that ‘one system fits all’ paradigms in school library programs has never worked satisfactory for the at-risk kids is a starting point in planning and designing personal change and program effectiveness. Resources to learn more about this topic at the end of most chapters give excellent sources for the interested reader. “Can do” sections suggest small changes that most every school could implement to make the readers more comfortable. “Think About” sections provide practical suggestions for things that can be done easily and will be effective with learners working at this level.

The authors use charts effectively in their work to show how ideas connect, and to help visualize the product to the reader. They practice what they are suggesting in the text through the presentation style. The volume is highly readable, and merits many re-reads to adapt the ideas to one’s local needs.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for training programs in Teacher-Librarianship Education, Teacher Education, and in District-wide Staff Development Programs and Resource Centres.

Information Literacy Assessment in K-12 Settings

Farmer, L. S. J., & Henri, J. (2008). *Information literacy assessment in K-12 settings*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press.

Information literacy is a hot topic in education and school librarianship. It provides a framework for curriculum development, pedagogical change and innovation, and an opportunity to re-examine the modes of assessment of learning that are being used. In this volume, Farmer and Henri address the tools that may be used to assist educators and administrators to assess the degree of learning that is taking place in their schools. The teacher-librarian can be in the centre of this discussion with personal preparation and philosophical alignment to the changes that are happening.

In chapter 1, Henri provides a strong philosophical perspective of information in modern global society, and the ways society is reacting to the wealth of information that is available. He provides clear definitions noting the universal and cultural aspects of this complex set of skills, knowledge and dispositions. Subsequently chapter 3 explores the relationship between information literacy, learning and the assessment process. It details how students encounter and interact with information with a possible result of learning. The following chapters outline conditions for IL assessment; the role of assessment; the processes of assessment; and potential problems and ways to deal with those issues. Finally chapter 8 provides a classified list of existing user-tested IL assessment instruments. Each chapter has significant footnotes and citations, and an extensive bibliography is provided. The index provides quick access to sub-topics and keywords.

Both Lesley Farmer and James Henri are well known in IASL circles. They have provided a wealth of literature and commentary on many topics. This book lives up to their fine reputation to be creative, and to be able to draw on the best of the published literature to produce a commendable document. It should be required reading by most Faculty of Education, Faculty of Library Science & Information Studies, and district educational leadership personnel. Every district resource centre (or equivalent) should have copies for local study purposes. This is a systematic approach to a current and critically important topic.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Achieving Educational Standards Using the Big6

Murray, J. R. (2008). *Achieving educational standards using the Big6*. Columbus, Ohio: Linworth Pub.

Obviously this book has evolved from years of experience using the Big6 Skills in the classroom and in the library. It responds to the US National Content Standards and the current directions in education across the nation. How can one teach students to develop the skills that will help them achieve state and national standards? This approach using the Big6 Skills makes it possible for a collaborative approach between classroom teachers and teacher-librarians to become a powerful team to reach these goals. From it the school will prepare students with the employability skills needed to be successful in college or in business and industry.

From the outset Information Technology or Information Communication Technology is accepted as a tool in the teacher-librarian's repertoire to develop the literacy skills of all levels of learners. An exciting comparison of the similarities between National Literacy and Technology Standards will show all readers the future direction for learning in cutting-edge programs. Teaching with the Big6 Skills addresses content standards and ICT literacy in practical ways. A wealth of documentation from various states is immensely valuable for personal interest and for convincing educational leaders of the evolving direction for school library & information literacy programming.

This book is step-by-step. It is logical. It is well organized. It has practical examples. It has a wealth of illustrations, charts, and samples plans and policies. Section 2 is particularly helpful in "Assembling the Pieces: Design Units Plans to Achieve Educational Standards". Step up and compare what is happening in your school, your district or your state. Use this volume to support your advocacy campaigns. Use this guide to help in designing local staff development programs for administrators, teachers, and teacher-librarians. Workshops with parents based on these samples would pay huge dividends.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED across the board, and across all borders in the global community.

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